7: Amery G-5 (1943-44) 1948 EG1 Albania EG1

administrative ends. Indeed, save for the short-lived rule of Skanderbeg, there had never been an independent Albania until modern times. It is therefore small matter for surprise that the Albanians have hardly acquired a national or state consciousness; nor indeed, outside of the towns and the coastal plain, has nature encouraged, or their way of life given rise to, social organisation in any form.

At the time of which I write, the family, or clan, was the basic, indeed the only unit of society among the Gheg mountaineers; and was held together by common ownership of the means of production and common interest in their defence. The head, or chief, of the clan still preserved patriarchal powers, sometimes even of life and death over its members. He arranged their marriages, allotted them their tasks, settled their disputes, and decided what courses they should follow in the burning issues of blood feuds and politics. In recent years, however, the spread of Western ideas had weakened the traditional respect for the patriarchal authority; nor was there any sufficient intermediate patriotism of the province or the village to take its place. Indeed, the village community as we know it did not exist, for the village of the Gheg highlands was but a group of houses, each often as much as a mile from its neighbour. There were no village councils or other corporate institutions, and the feuds between the inhabitants prevailed over their common interests. The ancient tribal system was thus dissolving into anarchy, for where there is no community there can be no law. Indeed, the cry of "stop thief!" would have been almost inconceivable among the Albanians, "Because", as Wordsworth wrote of other highlanders:

> the good old rule
> Sufficeth them, the simple plan,
> That they should take, who have the power,
> And they should keep who can.

In such circumstances, each man had to be his own law-giver, and alone, or at best with the help of his family, defended his rights or punished those that trespassed against him.

Anarchy knows no prisons — the most fundamental of social

7: Amery G-5 (1943-44) 1948 EG1 Albania EG1

comed Turkish protection against the Slavs and Greeks who threatened them on every side. It resulted rather from the jealousies of the Powers; and it was their representatives who determined the territories of the new state with such singular disregard for economic and ethnological considerations that they left as many Albanians outside the boundaries of Albania as within them.

The total number of Albanians has been generally computed at some two millions. Of these, upwards of one million lived within the frontiers which were proposed by the Ambassadors' Conference in 1913, ratified in 1926, and once more restored in 1945. Of the remainder, more than six hundred thousand inhabited the Kossovo, while the others were scattered in Montenegro, Macedonia, and Epirus. The amputation of the Kossovo was a heavy loss to the new state; for the region was the natural granary of the northern provinces, and the standard of living of the Ghegs rose or fell according as they were allowed or denied free access to it.

The economic and social structure of the Ghegs, or Northern Albanians, was one of tribal anarchy, save in the coastal plain and the Kossovo, where there were feudal estates. Islam and Roman Catholicism were the accepted religions: the Moslems inhabiting Central and North-eastern Albania with the Kossovo, the Catholics Mirdita and the inaccessible ranges of the north-west. A way of life near to the tribal system of the Ghegs still survived in the mountains of Southern Albania, but the Tosk tribes had never wholly recovered from the repressions of Ali the Lion and had increasingly disintegrated into communities of landowning peasants. The broad plains of the South, however, remained divided into feudal estates, owned by an Ottomanised ruling class and worked in part by an Orthodox Christian peasantry. Thus, while the distinction between Moslems and Catholics was one of geography and history, the Catholics being those Albanians whom the Turks had never subdued, that between Moslems and Orthodox was one rather of class and of cash.

It was scarcely to be expected that a conference of ambassadors would quickly set up a strong state among a people divided

7: Amery G-5 (1943-44) 1948 EG1 Albania EG1

meanwhile to the plain to the house of Ihsan Toptani, to throw a spanner into the wheels of German diplomacy.

A son of Abdi Bey, one of the founders of modern Albania, and a nephew of the famous Essad Pasha, Ihsan was now the head of the powerful Toptani clan. Under the monarchy he had remained aloof from politics, but during the war had shown himself a staunch, if prudent, supporter of the Allied cause. Independent of party, he was yet in touch with all parties and, since he was politically and financially disinterested, his opinion was respected by all. The care of his estates, natural caution, and an instinctive aversion to violence and disorder had hitherto prevented him from taking an active part in the guerilla movement. Instead he had remained in the background, emerging now and then to act as intermediary between the different guerilla factions, or as their link with the political leaders in Tirana. Thus, in the autumn of 1943, he had undertaken the preliminary negotiations between the Partisan and the Ballist leaders, and had acted as host to their meeting at Mukai. Later, in the disasters of the winter, he had taken in Colonel Nicholls and sheltered him during his last agonies. Since that time he had maintained close relations with the British Missions; and it was from his house that Hare conducted his campaign to spread disaffection among the enemy's garrison in Tirana.

Maclean and I accordingly set out with Hare and, crossing the Shupal valley, reached the head of the Qaf Bechit in the late afternoon. This was a precipitous col between Mount Daiti and Mount Berar, over which ran the shorter but less frequented track to the capital. The light was clear and from a jutting crag just below the col I saw Tirana for the first time. The capital city of Albania lies in a broad and fertile plain, surrounded by a crescent of mountains, open towards the sea. Thirty years before it had been little more than a village; now it was a prosperous town, a blend of East and West, boasting a population of some thirty thousand souls. Through my field-glasses I made out slender minarets rising between tall modern buildings, a long rambling suq or bazaar, and several broad, leafy avenues, flanked by whitewashed and red-roofed villas, set in green and shady gardens. There lay the prize for the victors in this many-sided struggle.

10:Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGl Albania EGl

a first-born may be inefficient, the mantle of a dead or dying head falls on the son who in the opinion of all the adult males in the household is the best fitted to keep it together, irrespective of whether he is the eldest or not.[1] This combination of birth and unanimity of choice gives these heads the strength of inevitability, so that they can be neither envied nor rebelled and intrigued against, but must be recognized and implicitly obeyed by their subordinates—a most important factor in keeping the peace.

Before the Turks left in 1912, the headship of a northern village or tribe descended in the same family, always to the head it had chosen for itself. Since 1912 successive Albanian governments have slightly modified this system. In non-tribal areas like Mat, Martanesh and Shpat there has been less need for a change; as far back as we can go, the head of the average village or group of villages has been elected by the community for his personal qualities in the same way as the head of a house. A few villages of Mat, however, had long been ruled by the landlords (*begs* or *beys*) who owned them; after 1912 the power of these landlords, the Zogu family excepted, was curtailed by the central government like that of the bajraktars of the north.

In the old days the laws were administered as well as enacted or revised by the ruling rank, who were collectively known as elders. The system was elaborate, with public trials over which elders presided, and at which evidence was taken from witnesses on oath as well as from the plaintiff and the accused, and a jury might be asked to render a verdict. Fines were the usual penalty for petty misdemeanours, and temporary banishment, permanent expulsion or death for serious offences; a modified form of imprisonment also existed. Offences against the cohesion of the social fabric, as understood by the mountaineers, were reckoned more serious than crimes against an individual. Thus parricide was graver than fratricide; the first struck a blow at parental authority, an essential part of the social structure, but since one brother had no right to rule another except in special cases, fratricide was little worse than an ordinary murder and hardly a public concern.[2] The murder of a neighbour or the theft of his property seldom entered the serious category until the criminal became an habitual offender. Then the community, regarding the man as a social menace from whom none of its members was safe, took whatever action the law laid down for his case.

[1] See Chapter V.

[2] See Chapter V, p. 38.

10: Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGl Albania EGl

his case. Since 1912 most of this administrative and penal legislation has been superseded of set purpose by European methods and laws, whereas the social content of the old mountain code has been left comparatively undisturbed, free to come into line with the ways of the West in its own time.

The community sense was fostered by every art the mountaineers knew. Each member of a household was encouraged to regard everything in it and everything its other members said and did as his own. The humblest man was encouraged to regard his village or group of villages as his personal property. If home, village or group of villages prospered, he rejoiced as if he had himself been advanced. If they were insulted or injured, he burned to avenge a personal affront. If they were disgraced by misconduct on the part of another member, he felt his own honour to be smirched. The patriotism so bred was narrow, perhaps, but it was genuine, free from egregious self-seeking, and by its emphasis on the need to keep the community's honour untarnished, a good deterrent from crime.

This close relationship between individual and community was also a curb on dictatorship. The ruling rank had always to respect the individual's property in the community's laws. They could not make any change in an existing law unless they obtained the consent of a General Assembly of their village or tribe. They could impose, but (except in the tribes which maintained fine-collectors) they could not collect fines; social pressure was necessary for that. In a very common punishment, social ostracism, they might play no more than a subordinate part. They could not pass heavy sentences like banishment or death unless a General Assembly demanded them, and if it did, they could not resist its will. In short, the elders voiced, but did not dictate, popular sentiment.

They were no privileged oligarchy either. They might sit in the seat of honour or get the lamb's head and eye at a banquet, but they had no official residences, horses or guards of honour provided for them at public expense. They lived in houses that were often meaner than those of their subordinates; they ate the same food and toiled in the same way in their fields and among their flocks. In fact, the self-government of the Albanian mountaineers went far towards being true democracy in the Anglo-American sense of that much-abused word. In its primitive way it was really government of the People, by the People, for the People. It had

10:Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGl Albania EGl

its defects, of course; sometimes a judge took a bribe or a man bore false witness in spite of the deterrents devised against such malpractices. Yet the legal system worked well on the whole, was often speedier and always cheaper than any European counterpart, and left few crimes unsolved. What chiefly precluded modern Albanian governments from adopting the unwritten laws, however, was their diversity. This was mainly due to the isolation in which the geography of their country compels the mountaineers to live, and the fact that they do not settle permanently at altitudes more than 3000 feet above sea-level, but live on the lower slopes of the mountains enclosing their settlement and in summer graze the upper slopes as far as the mountain crests, where a carefully demarcated boundary indicates the end of their property.

Communications were as dangerous as they were difficult. As a result the principle of delegating one man to represent a big geographical unit was not established until modern times. It was regularly practised in small units, where the delegate had to travel only a short distance, and that through known, if not friendly, country. It was enough that one man should represent his house at a General Meeting of his village or tribe, but it was unthinkable to the mountaineers to hold General Meetings at which laws for the whole area might be passed as in an English Parliament. At best two adjoining communities might meet to settle a dispute about their common boundary or a road or forest, and after much argument make laws about the matter that were binding on both. More usually, a village or tribe drew up or revised rules for its own governance without any regard to what others, ten, twenty or fifty miles away, were doing. The outlines of a law might approximate in different groups, especially if there had been some ancestral connexion between them, but the details of the law were as varied as the minds that shaped them in the various communities.

The isolation in which it lived bred a fierce individualism in each community. This prevented it from submitting to the laws of another, except in an emergency. Then it might call in an elder from outside to decide a case and afterwards consider his ruling law. Such an elder had to be specially renowned for wisdom and sound judgement, and with one known exception his influence never ran far beyond the distance he could ride in safety and comfort from his own community.

That exception was Lek Dukagjini, an ancient law-giver of such

10: Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGl Albania EGl

the old master reserved such business for himself and his sons, leaving only their own concerns to the masters of the new houses. As he remained the eldest or the most capable of the brothers, his help and advice tended to be sought by the others, particularly in external business, and his opinion was more regarded by outsiders such as tribal or government authorities. So he developed into the 'old man (or elder) of the brotherhood'. As the generations passed and the houses of the original brotherhood split up in their turn, the dignity of brotherhood elder remained in his family, handed down inalienably from master to master. The term 'brotherhood elder' was little used, however; 'first (or head) of the brotherhood' was preferred. There was no woman elder of the brotherhood or any larger unit. The mistress of the household of a brotherhood elder had neither authority nor influence outside his house, as he had. She was a foreign importation into the brotherhood, a stranger to it in blood, her only duties being to bear her husband's children and to work in the house, her only rights proceeding from her fulfilment of those duties.

In course of time so many households split up that a number of new brotherhoods were formed. In some the sense of brotherhood or even cousinship with the others faded, and only a remoter feeling of kinship due to descent from a common ancestor persisted. The agglomeration of brotherhoods then constituted a 'kin' (*fis*). In this, the fourth type, each brotherhood retained its own elder, and at the same time looked up to the elder of the original brotherhood as leader, calling him 'elder of the kin' or 'head of the kin'.

In the next, fifth stage of development several kins united to form a village. They might be distantly related to each other as in the village of Vuksanaj in Shalë, or of quite different stock as in the village of Nangë in Lumë. If related, they remembered which kin descended from the eldest brother in the ancestral home and regarded the elder of that kin as the village elder. If not related, they selected one of the kin elders, preferably the head of the strongest kin, for that position. Alternative names for him were 'senior elder', 'senior headman' and 'head elder'. According to the usual pattern of development each kin and each brotherhood in the village retained its own elder. Already it is possible to understand such data as the following. In the tribe of Lurë there were twelve elders, two for each kin. In the village of Perlat there were two men called village elders or senior elders; in the last days

10:Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGl Albania EGl

of Turkish rule these were the famous law-givers Dedë Lleshi and Likë Gjegjaj. Again, when Per Dedë Ndoj was senior headman of the village of Gojan in Mirditë, he took the lead in publicly executing a man of his own kin, Buçaj, for murdering a guest who belonged to the Martinaj kin in the same village. The story is related by Father Gjeçov.

This fifth type was the recognized superior of the sixth, the body of men who were unitedly called 'village elders'. These consisted of all the brotherhood and kin elders in the village as well as the village elder himself. For instance, in the district of Kurbin there were sixteen villages, each of which had its 'head (or village) elder'. But according to a document published on p. 129 of Father Gjeçov's book there were altogether forty-five elders in Kurbin. Besides the sixteen 'head elders' there were twenty-nine ordinary 'village elders', some of them kin elders and some brotherhood elders. In Mirditë these village elders were known as 'canon elders', because it was their business to see that the law was respected and applied. To avoid confusion between the single village elder and the body of village elders these will henceforth be alluded to as canon elders.

The document mentioned by Father Gjeçov introduces us to the seventh type, a personage styled 'chief elder'. In the document he was chief of the 'forty-five elders of the region of Krujë' (i.e. Kurbin). There is no explicit information of how his position came to this man or whether it was hereditary in his family. It can only be inferred that as he was a Përvizi of Skuraj, and this family led Kurbin, the position was hereditary and a tribute to the outstanding strength of his family. In so large an area as Kurbin there could not be any question of all the villages being related by blood and owning allegiance to Përvizi as the descendant, master after master, of the master of the ancestral household. In other districts where a chief elder existed, it may be assumed similarly that he owed his position to the personal qualities of his family rather than to its descent.

Some other kinds of elder were found, both among the southern tribes and elsewhere, but it will be easier to understand their position after the characteristics and functions which were common to the elders have been elucidated.

Viewed as a human being, an elder was an ordinary man without privileges other than the corner seat, head of the roasted animal

10: Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGl Albania EGl

CHAPTER XXII

BLOOD FEUD

I. FAMILY VENGEANCE AND COLLECTIVE VENGEANCE

To understand the fabric of the Albanian blood feud it is essential to remember several things. Till after the 1914–18 war communications in Albania were so bad, government centres so few and the gendarmerie so ill-organized that communities were largely self-governing. These communities consisted in the narrower sense of the family, and in the wider sense of the tribe. If a person was injured, the family in most cases, and the tribe in a few cases, by the law of self-government punished the wrongdoer. Since the individual was almost completely submerged in his family, an injury to him was an injury to the whole family and might be punished by any of its members. When the tribal community was involved, the injury might again be avenged by any of its members. When the injury took the form of murder, vengeance generally took the Mosaic form of a life for a life, but sometimes was achieved by the exaction of blood money or the imposition of exile.

When the family of a murdered man, in default of government action, took the punishment of the murderer into its own hands and killed him or one of his male relatives, the head of his family might admit that both sides were equal and make peace. On the other hand, while still admitting that both sides were equal he might prefer to continue the feud by killing a second male from the avenging family; that done, a second life was forfeit on his side. In this way the feud might rage backwards and forwards for years or even generations, each family being in turn murderer and victim, hunter and hunted. 'To take vengeance' was 'to take the blood' (that is, of the man already killed, not of him who was to make atonement); the criminal was called 'the bloodstained', and avenger and criminal thought of each other as the 'enemy'. In north Albania the criminal was also called the 'agent' and the avenger the 'master of the blood of the victim', i.e. the master of the house in which the victim lived. 'To incur a feud' was 'to fall into blood' or 'enmity'.

This simple outline was filled in with all manner of elaborate

10:Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGl Albania EGl

would have found themselves involved in a new feud with the household of the man they had killed, but by the local rule of 'circle after circle' he died as proxy for the real criminal and no new feud entered into the question. There seems to have been no time limit to their extended vengeance.

National solidarity was recognized in the debatable border lands where Slav and Albanian lived side by side. If an Albanian was killed by a Slav, any Albanian would kill any Slav in revenge. The crime, it was felt, had pitted the Albanian family against the Slav family. This national sentiment was so strong that though there has never been any love lost between Gegs (north Albanians) and Tosks (south Albanians), no Geg would allow a Slav to kill a Tosk without seeking in return to kill any Slav he could find. The less warlike Tosks did not feel a similar impulse. If one of their number or a Geg were killed by their Bulgarian or Greek neighbours, they left vengeance to the victim's family.

The community also acted as a single family when certain public servants were killed. If the victim were a Roman Catholic priest, he might lawfully be avenged by his parish, the tribe in which the parish lay, and his own family. If action were taken by the parish or tribe, the matter ended. The avenger's act closed the feud, and, fearing no retribution, he could hang up his rifle. If the priest's family afterwards killed another of the murderer's men, they began a new feud. Generally the family did not wait for the parish or the tribe to act. When a Mohammedan or an Orthodox priest was killed, it fell to his relatives to avenge the crime; the feeling that sacrilege had been committed was too slight to drive their parishioners into action.

If a field-guard of Lumë were killed, he was publicly avenged. If the murderer was from another village, any of the field-guard's fellow villagers could lawfully kill any man from the murderer's village during the first twenty-four hours, and afterwards he could kill the murderer or any other man in his household. In either case he could hang up his rifle. If the field-guard were killed by a fellow-villager, the village expelled the murderer. On the other hand, if a miller were killed, vengeance rested with his family; the village could not act. A field-guard was a public necessity; without his services the village economy would suffer, and he must be given public protection. A miller had taken up his work for the sake of private gain and was not a public necessity; if he were not at the

10: Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGl Albania EGl

mill, the villagers themselves could work it; the miller was therefore not entitled to public protection. The village blacksmith, with few exceptions a gipsy, was in even worse case than the miller. He was a public necessity, since Albanian peasants will not make horse-shoes or farm implements, but he was only a gipsy and no Albanian community would trouble about so low-class a creature. If he was murdered, only his family would avenge him, and they probably lacked the spirit to do so.

10:Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EG1 Albania EG1

682 accusation of taking government money to kill the murderer after
641 he had taken blood money from the family.

[167] The same fear of government action was at work in Kosovë, a province largely populated by Albanians but assigned to Yugoslavia after the Turkish empire broke up in 1912. A steady drift towards Albania proper went on among the Kosovars. Some were impelled by land hunger to go and take up the free land which the Albanian government had offered them; others came to evade Yugoslav justice. By contrast with the Albanian government, which did not yet punish severely homicide that was justifiable by tribal law, the Yugoslav government hanged most murderers. To avoid this ignominy, a Kosovar murderer preferred to emigrate, lock, stock and barrel, to Albania. Most interestingly, this emigration was the ebb of the tide that within recent centuries peopled Kosovë with Albanians.

[621] Sometimes a murderer did not run away of his own accord, but was forcibly expelled by the community. Although when murder was not punished by government, only the weak ran away voluntarily, the community expelled a strong man as readily as a weak [609] one. In tribal districts like Mirditë which contained several villages, the murderer's village could not expel him without the other villages' consent and help. If the village resisted the expulsion, the tribe as a whole had the right to 'proclaim' the village or to call in other tribes to bring it to reason. In small tribes like Nikaj the murderer's kinsmen could expel him independently of the tribe. In non-tribal districts like Shpat, where each village was a self-contained unit, it needed to ask no one before expelling a murderer.

682 A man sentenced to communal expulsion was always one whose
*628 crime struck at the roots of society as understood in the mountains.
674 Perhaps he had violated the acknowledged sanctity of the 'pledged word' by killing his enemy during a public truce or even after making peace with him. Perhaps he had infringed the sacred laws of hospitality by killing his host or guest. Perhaps he threatened family solidarity by killing a cousin to get his land. Perhaps he had killed a man to steal his rifle and thereby as good as robbed him of his manhood, for a man without a rifle is as nothing, no better than a woman. Perhaps he had committed sacrilege by killing someone, possibly the priest himself, inside the territory of church or mosque, or by breaking into the church to steal.

614 constitute three-fifths of Mirdita, as well as Shoshi and Shala in the tribe which bears the Dukagin name. There are 2 origin myths, one told in Dukagin, the other in Mirdita.

According to the first legend, 3 brothers came from a place called Marina near Jakova. One carried a winnowing sieve (*shosh*) and became the ancestor of Shoshi. The other carried a saddle (*shal*) and sired Shala. The third carried nothing, said, "*Mir dit*" (Good day) and walked away. His descendants are the people of Mirdita. The Mirdita people tell a more detailed story. They list 5 brothers, Shosh and Shal as before, named for the objects they carried, and 3 others who settled Mirdita—Orosh, Spaç, and Kushnen. The meaning of these words is obscure.[5]

614 621 In Mirdita where these 3 brothers settled they found other people ahead of them, the ancestors of the inhabitants of the 2 remaining *bairaks* of Dibri and Fan. Dibri and Fan had several kinship lines each, hence each consists of a number of *fis*. Orosh, Spaç, and Kushnen *bairaks* form a single exogamic unit today. They take their wives from Dibri and Fan, from the Christian *bairaks* of Selita and Kthella in Mati, and they did from Lura before they fell in blood with them. They also marry Christian women from the 7 *bairaks* of Puka. No man from Orosh, Spaç, and Kushnen can marry any woman from these 3 *bairaks*, or from Shoshi or Shala.

Shoshi and Shala form an isolated geographical unit, with Shala at the high and Shoshi at the low end of an enclosed upland valley. It is not easy to enter or leave this area. Hence the marriage restrictions between the two, if they ever existed, have disappeared, and Shoshi men regularly marry Shala women, and vice versa. The local rationalization is that over a hundred generations have passed since the time of the 2 ancestral brothers, long enough to remove any trace of consanguinity. By the same token they could theoretically marry their fellow *fis* members from Mirdita, except that the Mirdites would not agree. In any case

[5] The Mirdites claim that *spaç* meant "sickle," *kushnen*, "pitchfork." I did not learn what *orosh* was supposed to mean, nor can my Albanian friends in Boston identify it. *Orosh* may, however, be the same as Urosh, a Slavic name borne by the son of the Tzar

[continued p. 286 --Analysis]

614 621 the 2 tribes are so far apart, and so isolated, that the occasion would not arise. Shosh and Shala, like their brothers, found aborigines in their valley; with the descendants of these earlier residents they too can form convenient short-distance unions.

Merturi and Nikaj, the 2 Catholic *bairaks* of Malsia e Jakovës (the other Catholics, those of Krasniqi, migrated en masse some 30 or more years previously to Jakova) regularly intermarry, back and forth, like Shoshi and Shala. In general the larger exogamous units are found among Catholics, the smaller among Moslems. Most Moslems feel that 7 generations distance between kin is enough to permit marriage, which means that brides are usually taken from nearer home. North of the Drin, and in Mirdita, even when there are several intermarriageable *fis* in a single village, village exogamy is required. In the Moslem tribes to the south and east this is said to be unnecessary. In the town of Gur i Bardh, in Mati, we were told that village endogamy is usual. There can be little question that the Catholic system as practised in Mirdita, Dukagin, and Merturi-Nikaj is historically the older, and is the more closely associated with isolation and intense feuding.

In the next chapter we will go into detail on the number and locations of various *fis*.[1] Here it is enough to state the principle, amply demonstrated by the evidence, that where there has been little travel and a minimum of immigration, one finds single kinship groups occupying wide areas, as in the cases just mentioned. Where there has been more travel and moving around and changing of domicile, one finds many little kinship units in a relatively small area. Thus in Puka, where the main highway passes, there are dozens of *fis*, of a few households each, and the same is true in the more traveled parts of Luma and Dibra, and in the neighborhood of Scutari.

The *fis*, as we have seen, is the basic unit of exogamy. Like all human institutions and aggregations it is a mobile unit, never com-

Dushan, who despoiled the lower Drin country at the end of the 14th century (see page 432).[2] It is obvious that these contemporary translations of the ancestral names are apocryphal.

[p. 28(b)]

1 [see cat. 116, pp. 30a - 34b -- Analyst]
2 [see cat. 116, pp. 43a - 43b -- Analyst]

614
621 pletely static. It changes with local needs. We have seen how in Dukagin the local geographical requirements split a *fis*, and how in the relatively less warlike Moslem areas with a reduction in need for extended exogamy, the device of a 7-generation distance was innovated, while village exogamy disappeared. So far we are dealing with reductions in exogamy. However, there are instances in which the opposite occurs, and the incest group is ex-
608 tended. Two ritual mechanisms provide for this, blood brotherhood and godfatherhood..

When 2 men become close friends and allies, and find themselves in need of each other's assistance, particularly in feuds, their relationship becomes similar to that of brothers, which is an extremely close one. It is therefore considered necessary that they make this relationship legal, which they do by means of a simple ceremony. The 2 men prick their fingers with knives, and either lick each other's blood, or bleed mutually into a cup of *raki*, which both drink. Once this has been done they are one in blood, and their children cannot marry each other. The other rite, godfatherhood, has its

[p. 29 (a)]

POLITICS AND FEUDING

592 THE smallest political institution in tribal Gheg society is the household, the extended family living together, which is also an economic institution. The head of the household is the oldest male of the parental or grandparental generation, the patriarch. So strong is the feeling for age-grading in Albania that men will obey their fathers as faithfully at 40 and 50 as in their teens. Since all sons do not necessarily live with their fathers, but some may occupy separate houses, the institution of the household may thus be expanded spatially, although the relationships are maintained.

[672] The household is a unit of warfare; when a man commits murder within his own tribe, his [628] household suffers together. In seeking vengeance, a man can wipe out the blot on his family honor by killing the brother of his enemy; responsibility is held to be collective. If one member of a household kills another, which happens but very rarely,[1] nothing is done. The loss is that of the family.

• 621 The next unit is the village. It may be a compact group of houses, surrounded by its farmland and pasture; or it may consist of isolated homesteads, each in its own land. The latter is the more usual form. In either case, it has some central building, a mosque or a church; or it may merely have a flat place, usually shaded by an oak, where the elders 623 meet. Each village is supposed to have 12 elders, whose office is partly hereditary, partly elective. Various families habitually furnish one man each to fill this position. The word for elder is *plak*, which Miss Durham traces back to the time of Strabo.[2] One of these elders is the *kryeplak*, literally, head elder. In one village in Has, when I measured the *kryeplak*, he told the recorder that he was "mayor" of the village. He calls the elders together when events arise that need their

[1] Miss Durham gives one instance from Dukagin (Durham, 1928, pp. 69-70).
[2] Durham, 1928, p. 14.